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JUN 29 1965

To : The Secretary
Through: S/B
From : INR - Thomas L. Hughes *TH*

Subject: The Effects of the Bombings of North Vietnam

12369 #8

Effects on Popular Attitudes. Rather limited but quite uniform and convincing evidence indicates that the US strikes against North Vietnam have had no significantly harmful effects on popular morale.* In fact, the regime has apparently been able to increase its control on the populace and perhaps even to break through the political apathy and indifference which have characterized the outlook of the average North Vietnamese in recent years.

There is no sign of dissidence, despite the regime's warnings to guard against acts of "bad elements." There clearly is anxiety about possible loss of life and, to a lesser extent, property, and a number of people appear worried about economic difficulties caused by separation of family members in the partial evacuation from the cities. The hostility which these problems generate is, however, directed toward the United States and its "puppets," not against Hanoi. Letters to relatives abroad, even with due allowances for exaggeration and concern about possible censorship, evince a remarkable amount of confidence in the regime and its ability to triumph over the US "aggressors." In its propaganda media and political organizations, the party promotes these sentiments by appealing more and more to patriotism in a drive "to oppose the United States and save the nation." While deliberately fostering tension, the

* As in our May 3 Intelligence Note on this subject, our sources continue to be primarily letters from Vietnamese to relatives abroad, observations of foreign residents, and the regime's domestic propaganda output.

State Department review completed

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GROUP 1

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regime has attempted with apparent success to preclude panic or dismay by exaggerated reports of US losses and by constant emphasis on the long-run superiority of morale factors over material considerations.

Economic Effects. The bulk of the attacks have been south of the 20th parallel in the five southern provinces of North Vietnam. In the 1960 North Vietnamese census these provinces contained about 25 percent of North Vietnam's population. They are highly rural, with only four cities and eight towns which contain 3 to 4 percent of the population (1960 statistics). Vinh's population in 1960 was 44,000, followed by Thanh Hoa with 31,000, and by Ha Tinh and Dong Hoi with less than 10,000 each. The urban centers serve primarily an administrative function, with economic activities limited to marketing and minor processing of local farm and fishery produce. Particularly in recent years, the region has also served as a military training and staging area. These five provinces are also the site of some rural development, including state farms, mountain resettlement, and irrigation projects, although this development is not yet a profitable or important enterprise.

The Direct Effects. The locale and nature of the attacks preclude significant direct economic consequences. Economic traffic to and from the area is minor and unimportant, the essential transport needs being primarily administrative or military. Letter intercepts suggest some disruption of fishing and farming from attacks on fishing sampans and grouped peasants near major roads, but production losses are probably small. Such losses would be absorbed by the local population in increased hardships, with probably little political impact on the North Vietnamese regime since it could shift the responsibility for them to the "American aggressors."

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Mobilization Costs. It has been suggested by some that the intense mobilization of North Vietnamese society for defense, involving major social changes, represents a "cost" inflicted by the attacks. The argument cites the disruption caused by the evacuation of urban dependents, the excessive air raid and militia organization and drill, the expansion of military mobilization, and the reforming of enterprise organizations along military lines. The argument, however, mistakes the regime's use of patriotism as a lever of social control for a "cost." It seems clear that as a result of these actions the North Vietnamese population has become considerably more regimented, mobile, and responsive to the regime's demands, resulting in economic gains outweighing the economic "costs."

Since 1963, when the regime drew down its rice stocks by 100,000 tons in attempting to feed the swollen cities, the government has tried with little success to transfer the dependent population and non-essential activities from urban to rural areas. But in recent months a sharp exodus of dependents, schools, and other non-essential units has at last occurred. According to some reports -- probably exaggerated -- it has reduced Hanoi's population by as much as one-third. Apart from subsidized transport, the government had neither to pay the costs nor use harsh coercive measures.

Again, the mountain resettlement program has received a new shot in the arm. The program, which was to move one million settlers from the delta to the mountain areas during 1961-65, had been flagging since the rootless, mobile persons willing to go had early been transferred, and the local governments were faced with drafting the conservative, hard-core "resisters." Now, however, most young persons appear to have signed the "three ready's" pledge -- ready to fight, ready to join the army, ready to serve wherever the government sends one

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-- and there should be little difficulty in meeting quotas for some time.

Also since 1963 the government has been trying to meet the food problem by promoting the substitution of secondary foods (corn, yams, manioc) for rice in the ration. The effort encountered considerable grumbling and complaints. A number of reports indicate that after the air attacks began the regime was able to reduce sharply the share of rice in the ration, a development which seems to have been accepted without complaint or criticism and was possibly even welcomed by some as a contributory sacrifice in support of the war effort. The food problem, in consequence, appears to be well on the way to at least a temporary solution.

Military Costs and Problems. The rationale and design of the air attacks has been to interfere with the military support given to the Viet Cong in South Vietnam through destroying military and transport facilities south of the 20th parallel. While few expect that the effort will sharply reduce this support, it obviously makes the support more difficult and costly. (No solid information is available since interrogation reports are lacking on prisoners infiltrated after the bombings began.) Yet a few calculations suggest that these costs will be minimal. The North Vietnamese response will be to curtail non-essential activities (such as training in the area), to disperse storage facilities, and to move supplies by more diffuse and primitive means. Current military traffic requirements of the area are estimated to be in the order of 100 tons daily, which could hardly present any major problems or costs. While some specialized construction units appear to have been detailed to the area to repair damages, it is difficult to envisage any substantial drain on the total skilled manpower available within the economy.

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Communist forces in Laos are more dependent on outside supplies than are the Viet Cong, and the attacks on transportation may be creating quite serious problems for them during the current rainy season. Moreover, the daily missions over southern North Vietnam have certainly made a rapid, conventional invasion of the South more easily detectible and more difficult to execute, even though the PAVN is not a highly mechanized, roadbound force.

Our own statistics on destruction of barracks and supply depots (Table 1) make it plain that the attacks have made only slight inroads on total capacity. Actual destruction of personnel and supplies has presumably been even more minor, since the first attacks gave warning of our intentions. We have done proportionately much more damage to ammunition dumps, POL storage, and power plants, but even here the effect on North Vietnamese military operations has certainly been marginal, at best. Moreover, it must be anticipated that new production and imports of munitions and POL will, insofar as possible, go into dispersed and concealed small installations.

Logistic difficulties, specifically shortages of anti-aircraft ammunition, and organizational problems have been referred to in domestic propaganda, particularly in the military press. An April 17 article by the head of the General Political Department, Song Hao, indicated some concern that the military machine had become somewhat ossified and burdened with bureaucracy during "peacetime," making it more difficult to meet the current "combat" tasks. The armed forces, he declared, must undergo "a mighty and rapid change." Hao gave no indication of how extensive morale or ideological problems might be, simply warning that all negative "rightist" tendencies and "exaggerated desires for peace" must be combatted since they would result in a reduction in "combativity."

This is the only available press material on this subject, perhaps indicating that the regime was simply placing people on their guard rather than pin-pointing an area of immediate concern.

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Table 1

Strike Damage Estimate (thru June 24, 1965)

Target	Targeted	Hit	Attacks	Sorties	Natl Capacity (NC)	% of NC Hit	% of NC Lost
Ships	42	29	50	1,014	443,000 men	14.2%	2.0%
Depots	15	8	15	517	103,586 mt. tons	53.1%	17.4%
Storage	12	3	3	50	192,000 mt. tons	15.1%	13.1%
Oil Depots	11	6	17	259	10,550,000 sq. ft.	7.1%	2.2%
Power Plants	17	3	4	34	176,000 KW	9.0%	9.0%
Fields	9	3	3	170	--	--	--
Air Bases	57	25	34	1,097	--	--	23 unusable 1 some capacity 1 undetermined
Supply & Support	5	1	3	30	--	--	5.6%
Warehouses	13	11	5	40			2 inoperable 2 partly inoperable
Communications Installations	4	2	2	15			2 destroyed
Naval Sites	27	10	13	223			6 destroyed or inactive
Naval Bases							
Ports	11	3	6	166			2 50% destroyed 1 5% pier damage, 2 ships sank
Totals	224	103	152	3,645			
Reconnaissance				2,395	Vessels Vehicles RR Stocks	Destroyed 105 131 55	Damaged 161 156 242

Source: DIA